

Elder Abuse



Age Scotland Information and Advice

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Introduction

Abuse can happen to anyone and is experienced differently by every victim.

This leaflet is intended as a general overview of the different types of elder abuse and the options available for people if they suspect that they, or someone they know, are being abused.

See the end of this leaflet for details of specialist agencies which can provide advice and support.

1 Who is at risk of abuse?

Some older people may be more at risk of abuse than others because of problems with memory or communication which make it difficult for them to identify and explain the abuse.

You are less likely to be at risk of abuse if:

- you can manage your money effectively
- you can make your own decisions
- you can look after yourself
- you have a wide social network of friends and family

Who are abusers?

Older people who are abused usually know and trust the person who abuses them. Abusers may be a spouse, partner, child, grandchild, carer, friend, neighbour, or any other person in a position of trust. Some people are abused by the person they are caring for.

Sometimes abusers are carers who are not able to provide the level of care someone needs and are overwhelmed by their situation.

Some abusers are deliberately abusive and use abuse to gain power and control. Other abusers may lack the knowledge and understanding to realise that their actions and behaviour are harming someone else, such as not involving older people in decisions about their care or persuading them not to see certain friends or family members.

Where does abuse happen?

Abuse can happen at home, in a carer's home, in day-care, residential care, in a care home, hospital or in public. Sometimes there are no witnesses; in other cases other people may be aware of the abuse.

2 Different types of abuse and neglect

Action on Elder Abuse uses the definition:

A single or repeated act of inappropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person (1993).

There are different types of abuse, and people may be subject to more than one form of abuse at the same time.

Financial abuse

This can be as clear-cut as stealing (such as having money to pay someone's bills and using the money for something else instead). It also includes having control over someone's money and just giving them "pocket money", making them ask every time they need money and making sure they don't have enough money to escape from their situation.

Sometimes carers, friends or family members put pressure on older relatives to make financial decisions which otherwise they wouldn't make. Often this can be around the use or disposal of money or possessions through a will, a power of attorney, or in an attempt to avoid costs such as inheritance costs or paying for care. This is financial abuse. It is also financial abuse to take possessions without permission.

Tactics used to put pressure on older people include a hard luck story about needing a loan and bogus workmen who plan to trick their way into older peoples' houses to con them out of money or steal their possessions.

Verbal abuse

Verbal abuse would include someone you should be able to trust being rude to you, being verbally aggressive, shouting at you, calling you names, humiliating you or blaming you for things which go wrong.

This can be very distressing and can lead to a loss of confidence or depression and being afraid to act independently or speak openly.

Denial of basic needs

Denying someone their basic needs is abuse and neglect. This can include lack of help to go to the toilet, lack of help to eat, not seeking medical help, giving too much medication or withholding medication, not following a care plan, leaving someone malnourished or dehydrated or not providing the opportunity for social contact or the opportunity to do enjoyable things.

Emotional, psychological or mental abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse can include persistently ignoring someone, bullying, threatening, intimidating, insulting, and humiliating. This type of abuse can also include depriving someone of their right to choose how they want to be addressed, when to eat, get up, go to bed, what to wear, and who they spend time with. This abuse undermines the victim's self-worth.

Sometimes an abuser will stop someone having contact with friends or family or from going out alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the form of abuse which is least likely to be talked about in relation to older people, but it does happen. Any unwanted sexual contact or innuendo or verbal suggestion is unacceptable whatever your age or gender.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse can include spitting, hitting, pinching, scratching, pushing, inappropriate use of restraints, over-medicating, force feeding or handling someone roughly when lifting or moving them.

Institutional Abuse

This can occur when an institution starts to put its own needs for easy delivery of its service before the needs of the people it is supposed to help. Public institutions must provide services in accordance with your human rights which include:

- The Right to life.
- Freedom from torture, humiliation or degrading treatment.

- The right to private or family life, home or correspondence.

Examples of institutional abuse are:

- Toileting “by the clock”.
- Set times to eat or drink with no allowance for individual preferences.
- Care plans not being followed.
- Lack of privacy.
- No access to possessions or money.
- No respect for cultural or religious beliefs.
- Adults being spoken to as though they were children.

Discriminatory abuse

Under the Equality Act of 2010, public bodies must not discriminate against you on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or belief, language, sexual orientation, political opinions, or age.

3 How to protect yourself

When thinking about the best way for you to protect yourself, it is very important to remember that you are not alone.

Abusers are known to exploit people who feel isolated or have found themselves detached from their community or other people. Some abusers will try to make their victim feel more lonely and isolated to increase the victim’s dependence on them and the control they have over the victim.

To reduce this risk, there are practical things that you can do to make sure you maintain as much control as possible over your life and choices.

Planning to keep yourself safe

You can protect yourself by planning ahead and making decisions about your life now rather than having other people make decisions about you later when you may be more vulnerable. You could consider:

Legal issues

- You can get general advice about your legal options from Silver Line Scotland or your local Citizens Advice Bureau, but we suggest that you should see a solicitor before making any final decisions. Get independent advice before signing anything that you're unsure of or making any major decisions about money or housing.
- Decide who you want to take responsibility for your finances, property, care and welfare matters if you lose mental capacity and set up a Power of Attorney.
- Think about who you want to sort out your estate after your death and a will that meets the legal requirements to be valid.
- If necessary, update your will and Power of Attorney when your circumstances change.

Money

- Check your bank statement regularly.
- If other people do your shopping for you, keep an eye on receipts and what is spent.
- Don't let anyone have details such as your PIN number.
- Be aware of phone and internet scams which will try to get you to disclose your bank details.
- Keep important documents and valuables safe and out of sight.
- Don't lend anyone money unless you are sure you can afford not to have it returned.
- Make sure that people you trust know where you keep important possessions and documents.

Housing and care

- Think about your future housing needs.
- If you need help to live independently at home ask your local council for a community care assessment.
- If you employ someone yourself to help you, make sure you check their references and check whether they are employed or self-employed. You can get further information about this from Self Directed Support in Scotland website.
- If you need to move into a care home or into housing where you get more support research the housing available, the contract and the costs.

- If you are thinking of moving in with family, or they are thinking of moving in with you, you and your family should get separate advice about the pros, cons and financial implications of this arrangement.
- If you need work done to your house, your local Care and Repair scheme may be able to help.

On your doorstep

- Don't allow anyone into your home unless you know them, can confirm, their identity or you have made an appointment for them to visit – you might want to arrange a visit at a time when someone you trust can be with you.
- Always ask for identification but if you are in any doubt call their company before allowing anyone in. If the caller is genuine they will be happy for you to do this.

Local knowledge

- Plan how you would get out and about independently if you were less mobile.
- Find out what support services would help if you were less able to be independent.
- Find different activities which interest you locally.

Stay connected

- Stay in contact with friends and family who you trust face-to-face, by phone, letter or over the internet.
- Keep up with routine dental or medical appointments that you have such as appointments for vaccinations or health screening. Healthcare professionals are trained to spot signs that someone is being abused and can help you.

4 If you are being abused

Abuse can happen to anyone. If you are being abused you need to know that:

- It is not your fault.
- You do not deserve to be abused.
- You have a right to live without fear.

- You have the right to safe, healthy relationships and to have control over your own life.
- You cannot change or control the abuser's behaviour.
- Abuse often gets worse over time.
- There are people who want to help you.

You have choices about what to do – it is important that you choose actions which you are comfortable with and which are safe for you. You could:

Talk to someone – this can be anyone you can trust. Sometimes just talking about the abuse can help you to decide what to do about it. If you do not wish to speak to someone close to you, there are helplines such as Silver Line Scotland, Action on Elder Abuse, the Domestic Abuse helpline and Women's Aid you can call.

If it is safe for you, talk to the person who is abusing you or get someone to speak to them on your behalf. Make it clear that the way they are treating you is not acceptable and that you want it to stop. Sometimes family members or other people who are close to you don't realise that you are unhappy unless you tell them.

Tell someone who can make a difference. This could be your local council's social work department or the police. The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 allows local councils in Scotland to identify and protect people who are at risk of harm. The action the council will take to help you will depend on your circumstances, and as far as possible you should be consulted about your wishes. You could also speak to your GP or another health worker about the abuse. If you need support to explain your situation, you could speak to an independent advocate who can help you express your views and decide on the right option for you.

Take legal advice. You may need legal advice to set up or change your will or power of attorney, to try to recover money or property or to untangle a legal arrangement you have been tricked or bullied in to. It may be possible to get legal aid to help with the costs.

If you are not ready to seek help that is your choice – it is okay. But it may help to get more information about your options in case you want to do something about the abuse later.

5 Asking for help

Asking for help at any time can be difficult but it can be even harder if an older person is reluctant to tell anyone because they are -

- concerned that a family member or care worker will get in to trouble
- embarrassed
- feeling that they are a burden and that the abuse is somehow their fault
- dependant on the abuser (for care, money or emotional support)
- worried about reprisals or a worsening of the abuse
- unable to find the word to explain what is happening to them
- concerned about confidentiality and that others may find out
- unaware of the services, support or care which could help them
- fearful that other options could be worse than their current abuse or neglect
- lacking the information to make an informed decision

6 If you think someone else is being abused - tell someone

The symptoms of abuse are different for different people and different types of abuse. Symptoms can include changes in behaviour, anxiety, not wanting to be left alone with someone, withdrawal or anger.

Many people are cautious about getting involved in their friends and neighbours lives, but some people who have been abused are unable to get help for themselves and so rely on the people around them to raise concerns.

If you believe that someone is being abused, think carefully about what you could do to help and get advice for yourself from one of the support services at the end of the leaflet if you are not sure what to do for the best. You may want to be directly involved in supporting someone, it may be that a crime has been committed and that it is best for statutory services to be involved immediately or you may be at risk from the abuser if you approach them yourself.

If you decide to talk to someone as you think they are being abused, give them the opportunity to talk as much as they wish to but be aware that they may deny that there is a problem. Tell them why you are concerned, you don't have to accuse anyone of anything.

If the older person does tell you that they have been abused, stay calm and support the person to make the choice that is suitable for them.

7 Where to get help

Silver Line Scotland helpline 0800 4 70 80 90

Silver Line Scotland is the confidential, Freephone Helpline for older people in Scotland, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. It provides information, friendship and advice to older people and to those seeking advice on how best to support older friends and family members.

Silver Line Scotland
Causewayside House
160 Causewayside
Edinburgh
EH9 1PR

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/about-us/silver_line_scotland/

Email: Please email us through our website

Abused men in Scotland (AMIS) helpline 0808 800 0024

Abused Men in Scotland (AMIS) is a national organisation dedicated to supporting men who are experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic abuse.

AMIS (Abused Men in Scotland)
Unit 1F6 Eric Liddell Centre
15 Morningside Road
Edinburgh
EH10 4DP

Website: www.abusedmeninScotland.org

Email: contact@amis.org.uk

Action on Elder Abuse helpline 080 8808 8141

Action on Elder Abuse (AEA) is a specialist organisation that focuses exclusively on the issue of elder abuse. If you phone this number it will not appear on your telephone bill.

Action on Elder Abuse,
PO Box 60001,
Streatham,
SW16 9BY

Website: www.elderabuse.org.uk
Email: enquiries@elderabuse.org.uk

Alzheimer Scotland 24 hour Dementia helpline 0808 808 3000

The 24 hour Dementia Helpline is a freephone Scottish service for people with dementia, carers, relatives, professionals, students and anyone concerned about dementia.

Alzheimer Scotland
22 Drumsheugh gardens
Edinburgh
EH3 7RN
Website: www.alzscot.org
Email: info@alzscot.org

Carers groups

Carers Trust Scotland 0300 123 2008

Carers Trust Scotland (formerly The Princess Royal Trust for Carers) has been operating in Scotland since 1991. They are the largest provider of comprehensive carers support services in Scotland.

Carers Trust Scotland
Skypark 3
Suite I/2
14/18 Elliott Place
Glasgow
G3 8EP

Website: www.carers.org/scotland

Email: scotland@carers.org

Carers Scotland Advice Line 0808 808 7777

Carers Scotland is a charity set up to support people who care for an elderly relative, a sick friend or a disabled family member. They are part of Carers UK.

Carers Scotland
The Cottage
21 Pearce Street
Glasgow

G51 3UT

Website: www.carersuk.org/scotland

Email: advice@carersuk.org

Citizens Advice Bureau 0808 800 9060 www.cas.org.uk/bureaux

Call Citizens Advice Direct or visit the Citizens Advice Scotland website to find your local bureau.

Council Social work department

Look in the phone book or call Silver Line Scotland and we will find the number for you.

Money Advice Service 0300 500 5000

The Money Advice Service helps people manage their money directly through their own free and impartial advice service. They also work in partnership with other organisations to help people make the most of their money. It is an independent service, set up by government. Our advisors at Silver Line Scotland can also make a referral for you to the Money Advice Service.

Website: www.moneyadvice.org.uk

To book a face to face appointment:

www.cas.org.uk/book-face-face-money-advice-service-session

Office of the Public Guardian (Scotland) 01324 678300

The Office of the Public Guardian in Scotland has a general function to supervise those individuals who have been appointed to manage the financial or property affairs of adults who lack the capacity to do so for themselves.

The Office of the Public Guardian

Hadrian House

Callendar Business Park

Callendar Road

Falkirk

FK1 1XR

Website: www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk

Email: opg@scotcourts.gov.uk

Police Scotland (Emergency) Call 999

(Non-emergency) Call 101 to be put you through to your local police station

Police Scotland is responsible for policing across the length and breadth of Scotland.

Police Scotland Headquarters

PO Box 21184

Alloa

FK10 9DE

Website: www.scotland.police.uk

Self-Directed Support in Scotland www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk

The website is a one-stop-shop for information about Self-Directed Support for people who use social care services and health and social care professionals.

Women's Aid helpline 0808 2000 247

Women's Aid is the key national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children. We support a network of over 300 dedicated specialist domestic violence services across the UK.

Women's Aid

PO Box Bristol 391

BS99 7WS

Website: www.womensaid.org.uk

Email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk

8 Further Information

Silver Line Scotland 0800 4 70 80 90

Silver Line Scotland provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

0800 4 70 80 90 (from a landline)

0300 4 70 80 90 (from a mobile)

You can also contact us by textphone on 0845 226 5851.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 4 70 80 90** and simply state the language you need e.g. Hindi. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Silver Line Scotland staff will do the rest.

Support our work

Every year, thousands of older people across Scotland benefit from the vital information and advice Age Scotland provides. If you would like to support this work and help improve the lives of older people in Scotland you can donate by:

- Giving us a call on 0845 833 0200 and ask for the fundraising team.
- Visit our website at www.agescotland.org.uk/donate.
- Complete the donation page over the page and return in an envelope to Age Scotland, Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR.

Across the UK

For information and advice in the rest of the UK:

In England contact Age UK Advice on **0800 169 65 65**
www.ageuk.org.uk

In Wales contact Age Cymru on **0800 169 65 65**
www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland contact Age NI on **0808 808 7575**
www.ageni.org.uk

Would you like to support Age Scotland?

Support Age Scotland with a gift to enable us to continue producing fact sheets like this and all our other vital work to help improve lives of older people in Scotland. Please complete the donation form below and return to:

Age Scotland
Freepost RSBS_KEHC-GBBC
160 Causewayside
Edinburgh
EH9 1PR

Alternatively, you can phone 0845 833 0200 or visit www.agescotland.org.uk.

Title:	Initials:	Surname:
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Address:
Postcode:

I would like to donate £.....

Cash/Cheque/Postal Order

I enclose a cheque/Postal Order made payable to: **Age Scotland**

Card Payment

I wish to donate by (please tick) MasterCard Visa CAF Maestro

Card Number: / / /

Security Code: Issue Number: (Maestro Only)

Valid from: / Expiry Date: /

Please see overleaf for Gift Aid information.

Gift Aid Declaration

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Are you a UK Tax Payer?

If so, you can use Gift Aid to make your donations go further by ticking "Yes" below. If you Gift Aid your donation, the charity will continue to receive an additional 25p on every pound you give.

To qualify for Gift Aid, you must pay an amount of UK Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April one year to 5 April the next) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that Age Scotland will reclaim on your gifts for that tax year.

- Yes**, I want Age Scotland to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. I confirm I pay an amount of UK income tax and/or capital gains tax to cover the amount that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs will reclaim on my donations in the tax year.
- No**, I am not a UK taxpayer, and/or I do not wish to Gift Aid my donations.

Signature:

Date:

We may wish to contact you from time to time by either post or telephone, to provide you with information about our charity, services, or, to gather your opinion or views. On some occasions we may share your information with likeminded organisations. However, if you do not wish us to pass your details on, but are still happy to hear from us, please mark this box.

If you prefer not to hear from Age Scotland, please mark this

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Age Scotland

0845 833 0200

info@agescotland.org.uk

www.agescotland.org.uk

Silver Line Scotland

0800 4 70 80 90

Age Scotland Enterprises

0800 456 1137 (Edinburgh)

0800 500 3159 (Glasgow)



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